



NEWS

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FINAL REPORT ON TRIAL COURT EMPLOYEES SENT TO GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE

Task Force Recommends Standardized Personnel System for Nearly 18,000 Court Workers

San Francisco — The statewide Task Force on Trial Court Employees has submitted its final report to the Governor and the Legislature on a recommended personnel system for California's approximately 18,000 trial court employees.

The report's recommendations won unanimous approval from task force members, who include representatives of the judicial branch, labor unions, county government, sheriffs departments, and state executive branch departments. Chaired by Administrative Presiding Justice James A. Ardaiz, of the Court of Appeal for the Fifth Appellate District (Fresno), the task force was established by the Trial Court Funding Act of 1997.

"To produce a unanimous recommendation is a tribute to the statesmanlike effort of the task force's diverse membership," Justice Ardaiz stated. "They have produced a new personnel system for the court employees of California that considers the interests and concerns of everyone."

After 18 months of intensive effort, the task force issued recommendations that balance the need for a standardized personnel system that can be applied to all California trial courts with allowances for local flexibility. The report's final recommendations include the following:

- **Local Governance:** The task force recommends that trial courts have local

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governance over personnel and budget matters.

- **Employment Status:** The task force recommends that each trial court employee shall be considered a “court employee.” Employees’ salaries and benefits would be protected during the transition created by this standardization. While the new status would separate court and county personnel systems, employees would be able to remain in county retirement plans and courts would be afforded the potential to offer other county benefits to employees.
- **Employee Selection and Advancement:** The task force recommends minimum standards upon which each trial court should develop local personnel rules to establish a merit-based system for hiring, transfer, and promotion on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skill.
- **Meet and Confer:** The final report recommends that statutes be developed based on Judicial Council rules governing labor relations and that these statutes incorporate certain additional agency shop provisions if similar provisions modifying the Meyers Miliias Brown Act (the labor relations statute governing counties) are adopted by the Legislature.
- **Employment Protection:** The task force recommends minimum standards which include a system of progressive discipline and termination “for cause” rather than “at will” employment.

The task force recommendations will take effect only upon action by the Legislature. The Trial Court Funding Act provides that the Legislature intends to enact a new personnel system for employment of trial court employees that shall take effect by January 1, 2001.

More information about the task force and its final report can be found at www2.courtinfo.ca.gov/tcemployees.

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